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SOVIET MILITARY CONCEPT ON CONDITIONS
FOR ACHIEVING VICTORY IN CONTEMPORARY WAR

[This report presents the full text of an article by Captain (Kapitan) Svatoslav Gosman published in Obrana Lidu, central organ of the Czechoslovak Ministry of National Defense, on 10 February 1956.]

In February 1956, Czechoslovak Army officers who are enrolled in the first level of Marxist-Leninist training are studying the key question of Soviet military science: constantly operating factors which determine the outcome of war, and the role of temporary factors which influence the course of the war.

A correct understanding of this question is of great importance in scientific orientation of the command staff in the increasingly complex conditions of contemporary war.

The February topic of the Marxist-Leninist training, which concludes the series on Soviet military science, requires detailed preparation of leaders of individual lecture and seminar groups.

Seminar leaders should direct their attention particularly to the following basic aspects of this topic:

1. The objective legality of contemporary war and conditions for achieving victory in contemporary war.
2. Economic, moral, political, and military potentials and their significance.
3. The significance of constantly operating factors.
4. The significance of temporarily operating factors, particularly the element of surprise.
5. The mutual relations existing between constantly and temporarily operating factors.

In explaining the first question, the seminar leader will first show the objective character of the processes which determine the progress and the result of a war.

Soviet military science, based on the scientific principles of Marxism-Leninism, teaches that war, like all phenomena of social life, is not the result of a combination of coincidences, even though in war the effects of objective and subjective coincidences are much greater than elsewhere. The preparation of war, its course, and its final result are conditioned upon the effect of objective laws, the recognition of which is one of the primary objectives of Soviet military science.

In establishing the conditions for achievement of victory in a machine-age war, Soviet military science holds that the progress and result of a war are determined by the mutual operation of all economic, moral, political, and military forces of the nation.

Here it is necessary to emphasize the danger of fetishizing objective military laws. It is incorrect to think that because of the objective nature of these laws, people are helpless in dealing with these laws.

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There are two sides to a war: the objective side and the subjective side. The objective side includes the economic, moral, political, military, geographic, and international conditions and character of the given war. The subjective side of war is a reflection of the subjective conditions existing in the minds of the people and their informed creative activity aimed at destroying the enemy and achievement of victory.

From these conditions evolve two important conclusions which the seminar leader must stress:

1. Acknowledgement of the objectivity of the processes involved in the phenomena of war does not in any way mean that the legal progress of war is carried out fatalistically, outside the power and will of the people.
2. Acknowledgement of the objectivity of the processes involved in the phenomena of war likewise does not mean that the people can rely upon the automatic assertion of the given economic, moral, political, and military potentials.

Victory can be achieved in contemporary war only on the basis of the thorough understanding and skilled utilization of the objective legality of war by the people, who are the means whereby economic, moral, and military potentials of the nation are converted to reality and into factors of victory.

In this connection it is necessary to stress the mobilizing significance of established topics and the tasks of Soviet military science.

The study of specific objective legalities of war as an armed conflict is one of the topics of Soviet military science. Expansion of the subject matter of Soviet military science regarding the general legalities of war as social-historical phenomena (these legalities are established in Marxist-Leninist teachings on wars and armies) detracts Soviet military science from its real purpose. The content of Soviet military science does not include only strictly military operations (strategy, operational skills, tactics, organization, and preparation of the armed forces), but also the understanding and appraisal of the total economic and morally political factors (of one's own nation as well as that of the enemy) in their order and mutual influence on military operations.

Explanation of the second question must be based on the well-known Leninist thesis that war is a general appraisal of all material and spiritual forces of every nation. During World War II, J. V. Stalin clarified the deep meaning of this thesis by formulating the precept of constantly operating factors which determine the outcome of a war. The formulation of these constantly operating factors reveals the legalities of contemporary war and fully answers the question regarding the basic conditions for achievement of victory in machine-age warfare.

The constantly operating factors are the economic, political, and military factors which determine the outcome of war. Therefore, to ensure victory over the enemy it is necessary to ensure that one's side enjoys a majority of these factors. That means that one's side has a greater economic, moral, and military potential than the enemy.

The seminar leader will then call attention to individual potentials and the possibility of achievement of these in a capitalist and a socialist nation.

What is this "economic potential"?

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Marxism-Leninism provided the first scientific justification of the role of economics in war, and revealed its deciding influence on the progress and result of a war, on military art, on the organization of the armed forces, and the like. At the same time Marxism-Leninism showed that the influence of the economic factor on war has not always been the same, and that its influence is continually increasing.

The economic potential includes primarily the total of all material potentials of the nation to wage war, that is, the level of development of industry, agriculture, transportation, science and technology, raw-material supply, national natural and mineral resources, and the size, political and moral status, and class composition of the nation's population. In addition the economic potential includes the nation's ability to utilize these material potentials for victory. Here the seminar leader will point out the deciding importance of the social and state system, the great social-historical advantages of the socialist system over the capitalist system, the importance of continual development of heavy industry, and the importance of the new Five-Year Plans and their coordination in the socialist camp.

What is the importance of the moral potential?

Soviet military science teaches us that the moral and political potential of the nation and the army is their ability to withstand all the difficulties of war throughout its course. In other words, the moral potential is determined by the level of political enlightenment and unity of the population, loyalty to the existing social order and the government's policies, and the attitudes of the people toward the political goals of the war. Here the seminar leader must point out the economic bases of the moral and political unity of the population of a nation which has a socialist system with social ownership of the means of production (the end of exploitation). He will also explain the importance of the prevailing socialist ideology and of honorable goals in the war being carried on by the socialist state. On the basis of examples from the history of warfare, it is possible to show the level of the moral potential which is directly dependent upon the political goals of the war. The seminar leader will also stress the deciding role and effects of the organizational and political training activity of the Communist parties, directed at strengthening the moral potential of the nations of the socialist camp.

In explaining the military potential, it is important first of all to stress the difference between the concept of military potential in our camp and in the imperialist camp. It must be shown that military potential does not include all the potentials of a nation, but on the other hand, it is not limited to the total of the military elements.

Military potential includes the following:

1. The military cadre which ensures the development of a mass army in wartime.
2. The reserve of command and technical cadres which permit the creation of additional units.
3. The number and quality of various types of divisions.
4. Arms and military technology.
5. The organizational capabilities of the command staff, the status of military knowledge and its mastery by the command staff, and military schools and academies along with their capacities and quality. The economic potential, the people, who are the prime mover in war, and the moral potential of the nation are the bases for a nation's military potential.

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In concluding the explanation of this problem, it is necessary to call attention to the fact that in establishing or appraising conditions necessary for victory, a nation's economic, moral, and military potentials must be considered together, along with their mutual interaction.

In explaining the third question, it is proper to direct attention to the importance of the precept of constantly operating factors in ensuring the defensive capability of our nation and of our entire camp.

The basic significance of the precept of constantly operating factors lies in the fact that of all the complex conditions and forces which shape the course and the final outcome of the war, Soviet military science stresses the primary, essential, constantly operating factors. The stability of the rear echelon, the morale, the number and quality of divisions, the arms of the military units, and the organizational capability of the command staff are the five basic constantly operating factors which when existing mutually and in unity, represent the economic, moral, political, and military factors that determine the course of the war. Here the seminar leader will consider the stability of the rear echelon and will point out its major significance. The rear echelon embodies the unity of the economic, moral, and political potentials of the nation.

The importance of the precept of constantly operating factors cannot be compromised. It provides the key to the recognition of the legality of war as an armed conflict. It reveals the direct dependence of the progress and result of a war upon the economic and political development of a nation. It shows a new road to understanding the topics of Soviet military science. It permits efforts to be concentrated on these questions, whose solution is the key to ensuring the defensive capability of the nation. It aids in the scientific planning of the principles which will guide the building of the armed forces and their training and education. It also very convincingly reveals the great advantages of the socialist system in ensuring the defense of the nation.

The goal of the fourth question is to show the existence of temporarily operating factors and to demonstrate their importance in contemporary war.

Among the temporarily operating factors are: the element of surprise, the economic change-over of the nation to a wartime status, advantage in mobilization of armed forces, superiority in some types of weapons, the level of combat experiences, and the characteristics of combat at the beginning of the war.

Soviet military science teaches that the temporarily operating factors, particularly the element of surprise, can have a great effect not only at the beginning of a war but throughout its entire course. In this connection, it is necessary to eliminate the false idea that surprise attack can bring only temporary success. The history of warfare over the past 50 years convincingly shows the growth of the significance of the element of surprise. Here the seminar leader will show the reasons for the increasing importance of surprise since World War II.

Soviet military science recognizes the great importance of the element of surprise, not only at the beginning of war, but throughout its course. Now, when the army's equipment is supplemented by hydrogen and atomic weapons, under certain conditions surprise can be one of the deciding factors in achieving success not only in individual battles and operations, but in the entire war.

Further, on the basis of activities of the Soviet Army in World War II, it is necessary to explain the use of the element of surprise in battles and operations and to show the manner in which this element of surprise was achieved.

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In considering the possibility of an attack on Czechoslovakia (attack on any boundary of the socialist camp), the seminar leader will explain the great importance of continual combat readiness of the armed forces, and the means whereby such readiness may be ensured. Further in this connection, it is necessary to show the importance of the Warsaw Pact and the importance of the unified command of the member forces of the socialist camp. It is further necessary to point out the importance of training the armed forces under the most difficult conditions, on the assumption that both sides will use weapons of mass destruction.

The fifth question involves the correct explanation of the mutual relation of constantly and temporarily operating factors. It is necessary to point out the legality of the ever-increasing importance of the constantly and temporarily operating factors in a machine-age war. The seminar leader will explain that ensuring an advantage only in some permanent factors, without considering the potentials of one's own rear echelon and the economic and moral potentials of the enemy, cannot bring continuous success in the war. The seminar leader will also explain the legality of the decline of strength that occurs in unjust wars, and the legality of the gain of strength (which is in keeping even with the objective legalities of contemporary war) that occurs in just wars which are carried on by socialist nations. The seminar leader will proceed to explain the distortion and dogmatic interpretation of the true meaning of the thesis of constantly operating factors (the 23 February 1942 order of J. V. Stalin), which led to underestimation of the enemy's potentials. In reality, this order embodies the thought that the fate of the war during its first months (conditions created by the unexpected attack by fascist Germany) depended not only on the constantly operating factors, but also on the serious circumstance created by the enemy's unexpected attack. The order clearly proves that a sudden attack cannot be considered as a secondary phenomenon which will automatically become ineffective. In order that the results of such an unexpected attack may be eliminated, the enemy must not be permitted to fully utilize his military advantage, but the most resolute battle must be led against him.

Since the February topic concludes the course on Soviet military science, it is recommended that the seminar leader shorten the seminar on the February topic by one hour, and utilize this hour for a review of all the material which has been covered. In the review, the seminar leader may call attention to the following questions:

1. The importance of Marxist-Leninist training on war and armies in the study of Soviet military science.
2. The essentials, theme, tasks, and content of Soviet and bourgeois military science. The importance of constantly operating factors.
3. The character of contemporary war. The importance of the element of surprise in a battle, an operation, and in the war in general.
4. The theoretical justification of the main tasks of the current year of training. The importance of the morale of the army, the commander's authority, and continuity of the training process.

The following literature is recommended for seminar leaders on the February topic:

1. V. I. Lenin, Essay on Warfare, pp 17-19, 87-92, 140-144, 199-201
2. J. V. Stalin, On the Great Nationalist War, pp 35-41

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3. P. Rotmistrov, "For the Creative Development of Questions of Soviet Military Science," Obrana Lidu, 7 Apr 55
4. E. Boltin, "On Soviet and Bourgeois Military Science," Obrana Lidu, 7 Sep 55
5. A. Cepicka, "Address at the Graduation of Students of the Military Political Academy (Vojenska politicka adademie)," Obrana Lidu, 16 Sep 55
6. V. Kratochvil, "The Main Tasks in Military Science Activity," Obrana Lidu, 17 Sep 55
7. B. Lomsky, "Important Tasks of Staff Commanders and Officers," Obrana Lidu, 25 Jan 55
8. G. Fyodorov, "Dialectic and Historical Materialism, and Military Science," Lidova Armada, No 21, 1955
9. V. Zubarev, "Lenin and Military Science," Lidova Armada, No 22, 1955

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